



STATEMENT BY

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**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

ON THE OCCASION OF

**PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE LIVING CITY:
PROMOTING URBAN BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE**

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**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

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Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure for me to join you here today. And I am pleased to associate the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (the CBD) with Concordia University's "Partnerships for the Living City" Conference, organized by its newly-established Loyola Institute for Sustainability.

Meetings like this help draw attention to the importance of cities in stemming the tide of global biodiversity loss.

Why, you may ask, are cities important in this context? Cities are, after all, the epitome of anthropogenic creations, and they typically *displace* nature. Well, there is more to it than that. There is a reason why the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Ban Ki-Moon, has said "*the road to global sustainability runs through the world's cities and towns*".

More than half the world's population now lives in cities, a trend that is continuing. Cities, furthermore, utilize 75% the natural resources utilized worldwide. They therefore present the greatest need for positive action for biodiversity. However, cities also provide the greatest source of innovation and dynamism to effect such action... it is in cities that the offices of almost all levels of government and almost all corporations are housed. It is in cities that most people and most voters live. It is in cities that change is catalyzed. Cities therefore have a profound effect on biodiversity – both directly and indirectly.

However *biodiversity* has an equally profound effect on *cities*. An urban citizen is just as reliant as anyone else on the ecosystem services that are underpinned by biodiversity: fresh air, clean water, food and shelter are all elementary examples of the products of these services. Most of these services are produced outside cities, but make the city habitable and enjoyable. Biodiversity *within* cities is also critical. For example it regulates our local climate; it can play a role in flood attenuation; and it helps to connect us with nature and contributes to our health and wellbeing. Consider, for instance, Montreal without Mount Royal Park!

On the governance level, cities have a key role to play in national efforts to achieve the goals and targets of the CBD's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. Such a collaborative approach is guided by the Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity that was endorsed by the Conference of the Parties to the CBD. It is supported by the work of the CBD Secretariat and its partners, and is applied by progressive cities and subnational governments worldwide. Montreal is one such city, and institutions like Concordia University contribute to Montreal's good standing in this regard. The Loyola Institute promises to strengthen that contribution and we greatly anticipate the fruits of their labor in the near future.

Today we look forward to learning from Mayors and other elected officials of the City of Montreal, and other distinguished contributors, about greener and more livable urban environments. Please enjoy the event and draw inspiration from your participation and your interactions.

Thank you.